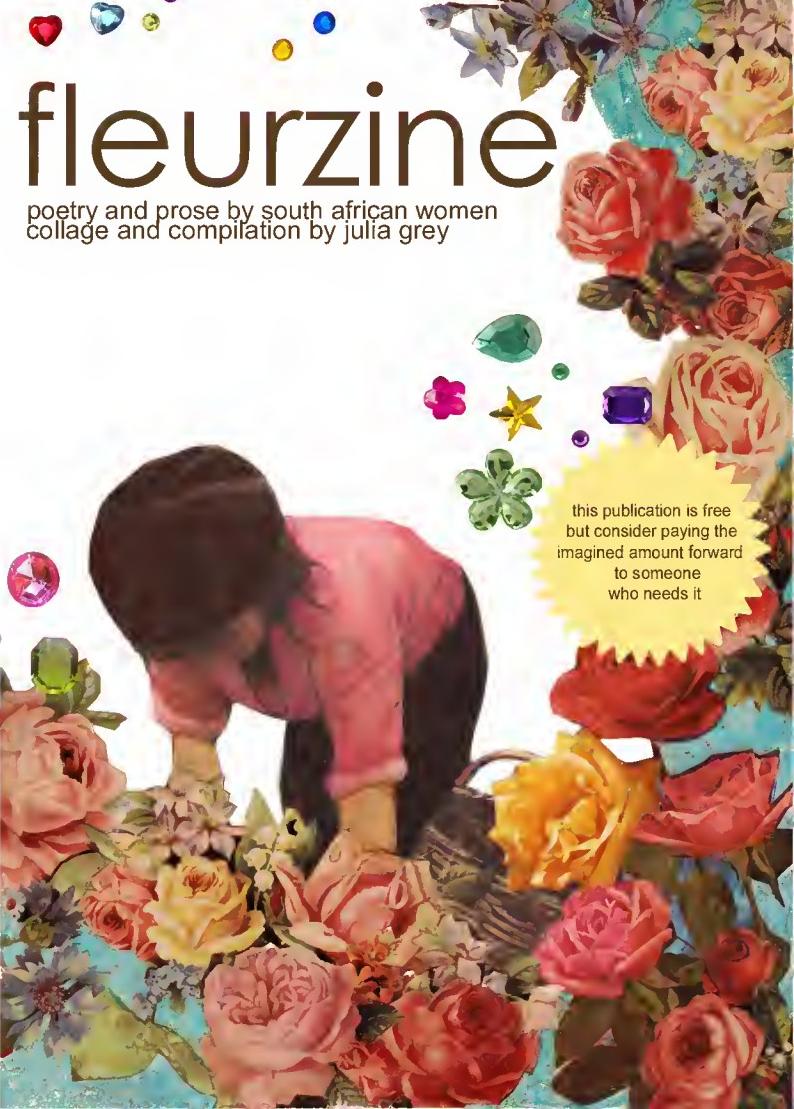


fleurzine

poetry and prose by south african women
collage and compilation by julia grey

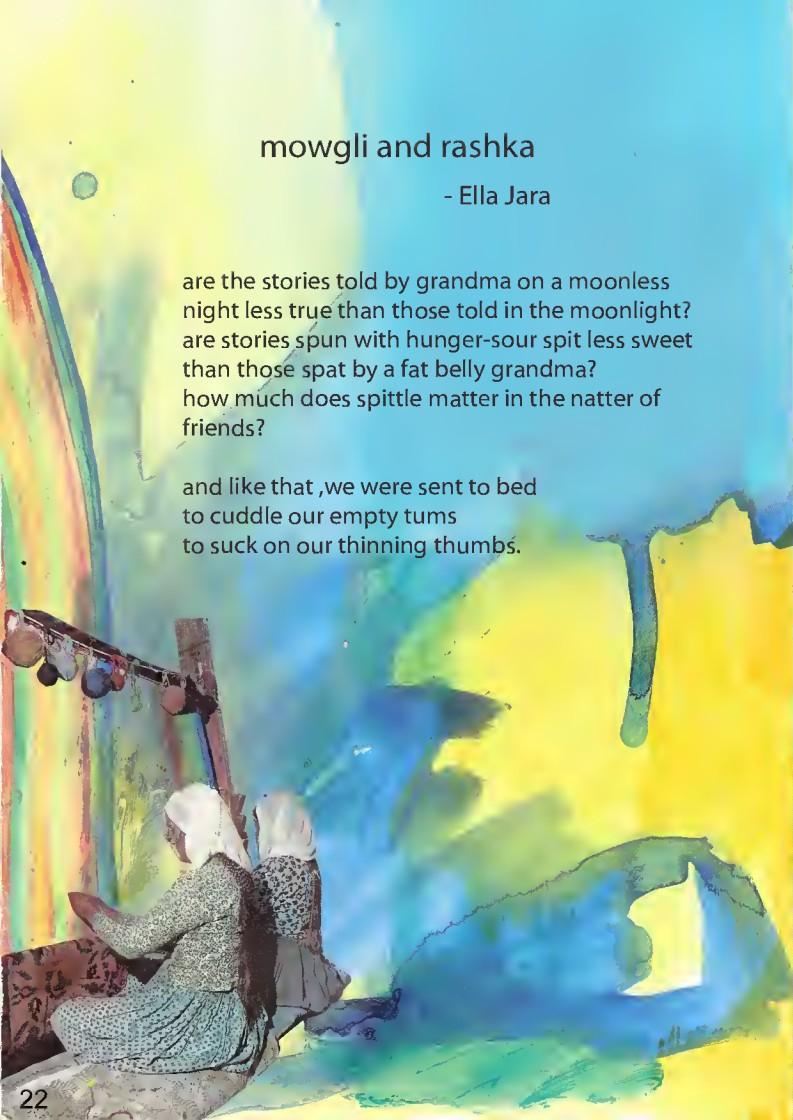


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sweets for thohoyano, mowgli and rashka, the clock struck
and this crazy state of affairs found on
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mowgli and rashka

- Ella Jara

are the stories told by grandma on a moonless
night less true than those told in the moonlight?
are stories spun with hunger-sour spit less sweet
than those spat by a fat belly grandma?
how much does spittle matter in the natter of
friends?

and like that ,we were sent to bed
to cuddle our empty tumms
to suck on our thinning thumbs.

Miss Rosemary and I

Miss Rosemary and I abandoned our talk of compound exhaustion, having spent ourselves recklessly on parties and picnics and orchestras and dining out and flirtatious repartee with shadowy and morally questionable gentlemen, and dressing ourselves up; applying make-up to our pretty young faces and comparing notes on the art and clothes and carpets and records and books and tsatskes dotted all about Miss Rosemary's enviable abode, and readied ourselves once again to go out.

Possibly we were both not in the most heightened state of the physical desirability we both exude, almost all of the time, but in any event, I got a few lovely compliments on the subject of my irrefutably dashing new hairstyle, and Miss Rosemary got rather lustfully stared at by a healthy strapping youth as he passed by in his carriage.

We also passed a dog we had met in the park on a prior excursion, who was happy to see us both.



Off we went, independent young women, to explore the far wilds of the Milnerton market.

- Saskia Druyan

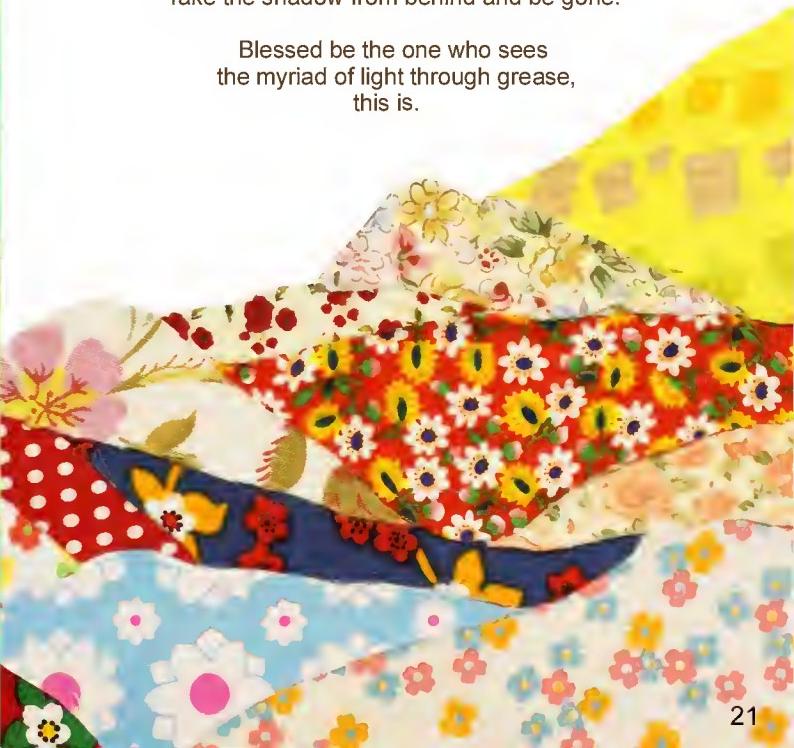


when the wind's howling,
i blow kisses into it,
hoping they'll find you;
smack you sideways.

The currents are colder further down
Where skeletons put their keys into a bowl
And our mouths, taciturn and bloated
with the kisses we left inside to dry..

And now I'm inside
and the light
Red, reaching through the veins of my eye -
lidded guises.
Persephone, hide this.
Take the shadow from behind and be gone.

Blessed be the one who sees
the myriad of light through grease,
this is.



lotus lake

from the album for astrea

- ella joyce buckley

Fishnets pull back on the bow of our lips
Rolling the windows down like dice
and stealing each other's flesh

Lost in the waltz we made
wound up like clocks
dressed in ideas, loose as scarves
Until tangled, drunk, strangled
in brilliance
we dance around the luck lotus.

Until we were swimming
We swam until we drowned
and sank into pillows
of water.

Finding moth flight,
finding
moth flight
finding



this crazy state of affairs

Rosemary Lombard

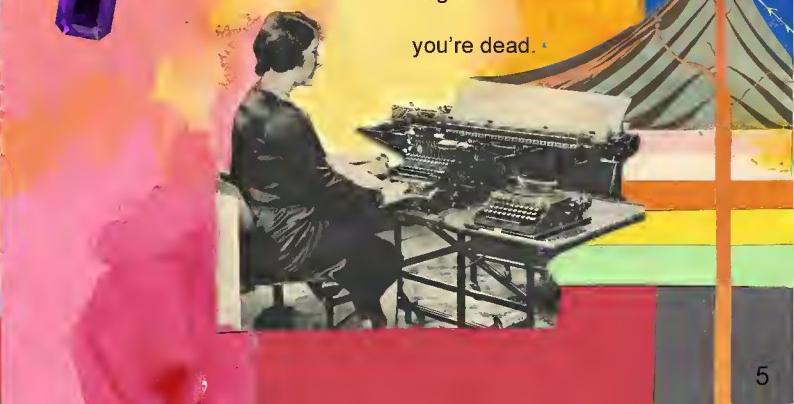
it's like tetris,

when the shapes are raining down,
apo-collapse from the sky,
and you have the wrong shape for the
chasm you need to fill and it blocks the
hole and then the right one
comes along and shit shit shit

it has
nowhere to
go and it
touches

the ceiling and

you're dead..



In the Long Hot aftermath of Liberation

- Âmilcar Patel

In the long hot aftermath of liberation
Fragments of your words sail to me
On the Cape Southeaster.

'We are looking forward to a just and egalitarian society'

But the Lernaean Hydra of
Comfort and complacency
Devours us in our sedated sleep;
Amenable as we've become
To see one family fatten,
While the other is left to famish.

At night, the radio plays Somlandela
Softly, and sis'Ayesha telephones
The Voice of the Cape to give
comfort to some recently
Retrenched community member.



the clock struck

My earliest childhood memory is of my second birthday. It's a sunny winter afternoon. The dry grass smells stubby and brown. The pelargoniums smell interesting too. I know what they are called because Nana always shouts at me when I pick the glowing red flowers. The slasto paving is warm and there are stripy lizards that scuttle away. Mommy has made me a Hickory Dickory Dock cake, and set it on the outside table (which is white moulded asbestos/concrete in the shape of a faux slice through a tree trunk....I remember this well because it was around for several years). Standing next to the table, I am only able to see the side of the cake.

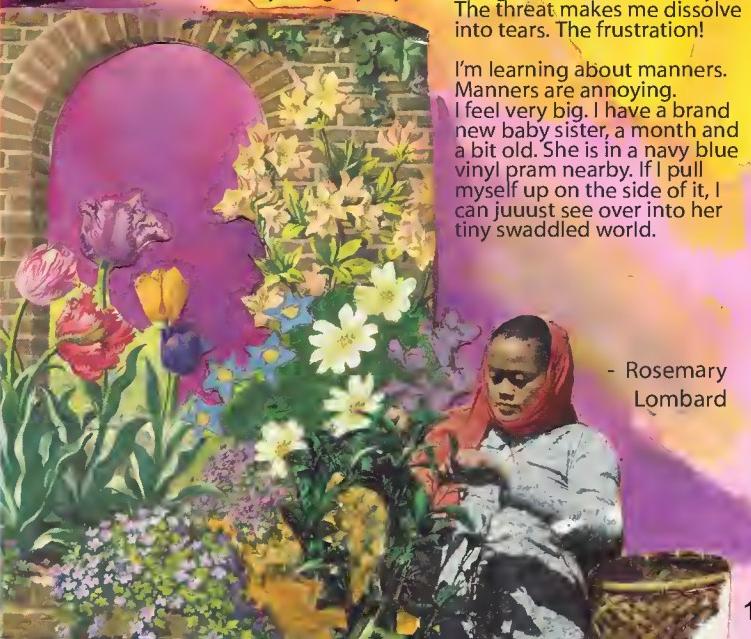
Pink and white marshmallows encircle it, magically turned into mice with little cardboard ears and liquorice bootlace tails, and when I am picked up to blow out the candles, the clock's face on top of the cake is made from liquorice too, and glacé cherries. The liquorice doesn't taste very nice. I like the cherries.

Yes please, thank you very much, Nana. I say it after her because if I don't she won't give me what I want. Don't put your feet on the table.
No. That's very naughty. If you do it again Nana will smack you.

The threat makes me dissolve into tears. The frustration!

I'm learning about manners. Manners are annoying. I feel very big. I have a brand new baby sister, a month and a bit old. She is in a navy blue vinyl pram nearby. If I pull myself up on the side of it, I can juuust see over into her tiny swaddled world.

- Rosemary Lombard



sweets for thohoyano

I was seven and she was six. She had come to visit, spend time with her big sister. I was too busy to spend all my days with her. She loved to play outside, roam the rivers and catch frogs and fireflies like she did at home with our sister and brother, but that wasn't my scene. She tried to teach me games: skipping rope, umagalobha and amatshe but I sucked at every one. I always wanted to be inside, alone.

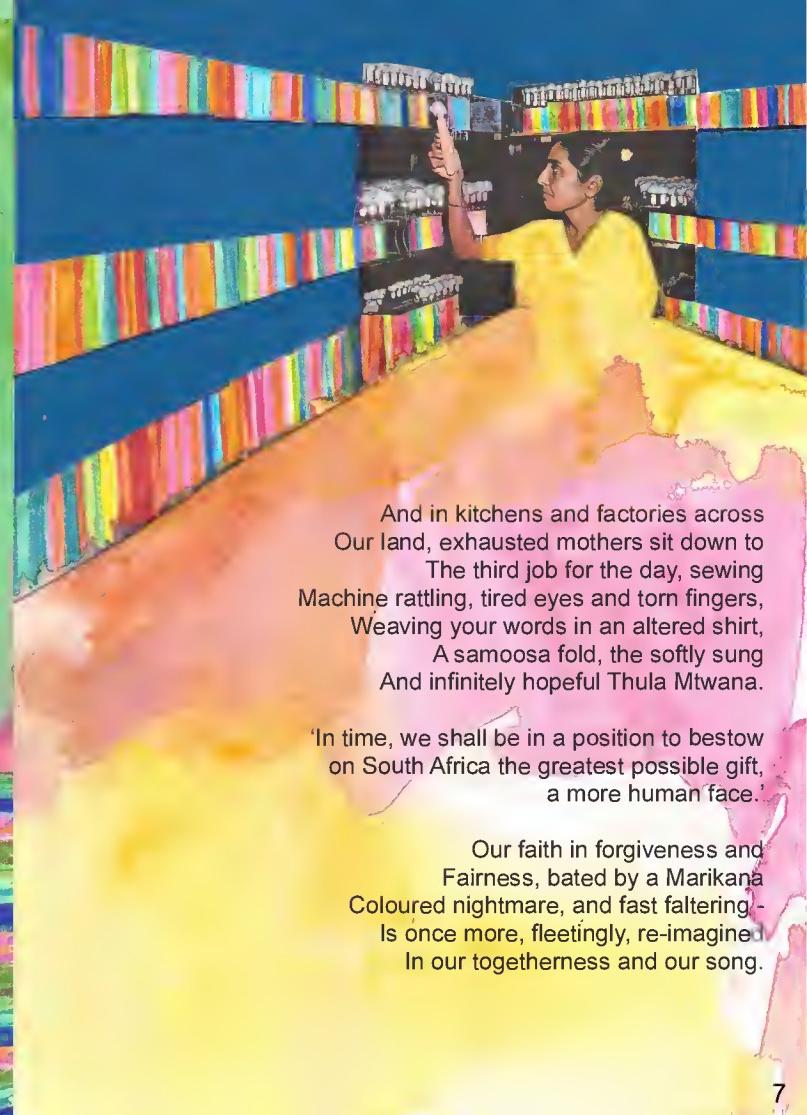
I felt bad, not being able to join in on her fun and so everyday I'd come home with a sherbet, a lollipop, something she could squeeze from a wrapper and eat in the dark.

Ayanda would rush to the gate to greet me in the afternoon or I'd find her at the bus stop waiting to walk me home, her arms open for a hug. I thought at first that she was after the sweeties in my jumper but discovered that she was excited to have me back. This devotion was new to me. I didn't know how to hug her back or say simple things like, "I'll miss you" or "I love you too."

In the evenings as she washed or getting into her nightie, I would tell my sister stories. I would lie to her and she would laugh. When I was attacked by a waif of a girl who took me for everything, I told my sister I had met a giant on my way home. I told her he had fangs. I said I'd fought him till he broke down and told me he had a sick child and so I decided to give him everything I had. She thought that I was brave, that I was kind. She told me this as she pressed toothpaste onto the brush. I stopped her before she could wet the brush, reached into the front pocket of my jumper and pressed two socks of sherbet into her wet palm. I leaned in and kissed someone else, for the first time in my life.

Today my sister is at the dentist,
I can imagine her panic and fear
but I'm glad she's old enough to
brave it on her own

- Ella Jara



And in kitchens and factories across
Our land, exhausted mothers sit down to
The third job for the day, sewing
Machine rattling, tired eyes and torn fingers,
Weaving your words in an altered shirt,
A samosa fold, the softly sung
And infinitely hopeful Thula Mtwana.

'In time, we shall be in a position to bestow
on South Africa the greatest possible gift,
a more human face.'

Our faith in forgiveness and
Fairness, bated by a Marikana
Coloured nightmare, and fast faltering -
Is once more, fleetingly, re-imagined
In our togetherness and our song.



The day before Christmas I got lost in King Williams town,
Stopped at the Engen that is always busy and talked my way
through sex and intimacy on the N2 we finally found.

Grahamstown rode passed the windows

in a speechless nostalgic blue

and now I am here again, in the same hut as another time I slept with
Raymond Carver's collected poems in my arms for five nights

The road was longer, steeper and stonier.

This time, the trees bigger.

But it's the same quiet that makes me yawn with the hit of aroma
and dream with only the sounds of crickets.

I could be cold here and not feel it.

I am tired here and speechless.

Not from the tension down the 4x4track,
not from the awkward reality
of unforgiving conversation,
not from the saucers that always fix me.

Not from the freedom.

All of that might make me jabber.
But from the mist of stunned perception.

From the absolute silence
that nothing can effect.

From driving to the end of the Earth
to discover that it still carries on in ordered
spice cellars and tinfoiled roofs.

I am not sitting in the same grass I was then,
not hearing the same insects,
even in the same patch.

I still don't know what they are called
because I make infrequent visits back to what I know I like.
There is damage in every misfit house but here I have only myself.

- Nadine Botha
from *the bad book* 2013

poolside

from the album *blood finds no sea*



black parrots
wings chopped

left in a room i may have left too soon

midwife milk muscles across the moon
and my darling
who's there
in a startling pose

by the poolside

yellow monkeys
inside your eyes
depict surprise
and I'm so awfully apart
so awfully self preserved

don't you too wish
we could swim across the moon
as though flying
to paradise
denial
to paradise

don't let me laugh at anyone anymore
water in my mouth
at the very least
blood in my shoe
up at you
by the poolside

- Ella Joyce Buckley

the second year of bad sex

from *the bad book* 2013

Because I can't imagine
that anyone can love me,
and yet still believe that my experience of
life can approach the thrill of literature –
some part of me does believe

that I am as indestructible as fiction.
That life just goes on.

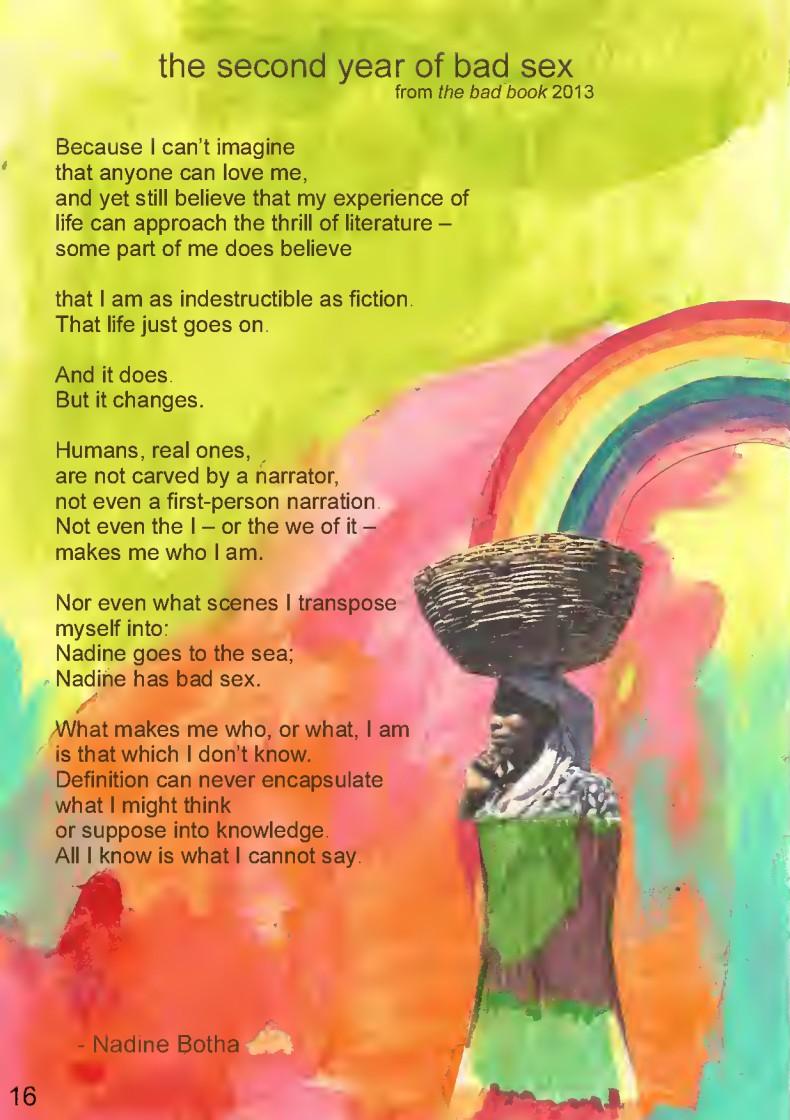
And it does.
But it changes.

Humans, real ones,
are not carved by a narrator,
not even a first-person narration.
Not even the I – or the we of it –
makes me who I am.

Nor even what scenes I transpose
myself into:
Nadine goes to the sea;
Nadine has bad sex.

What makes me who, or what, I am
is that which I don't know.
Definition can never encapsulate
what I might think
or suppose into knowledge.
All I know is what I cannot say.

- Nadine Botha



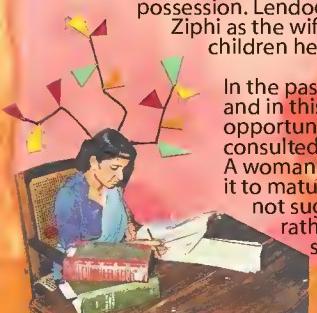
Phoenix of the Sabbathi – the Story of Zippi

Paraffin slips as mucus would off a wintry nose, glugging from the pouty lips of a 1 liter milk bottle in her shaking hand to the black stopper of her bathroom sink. She sighs as she drowns her Mnazaretha in, neck first, sleeves and finally the hem.

"Shembe wama Mnazaretha, uMalusi wam... **" – the hymn has the cadence of an apologetic dirge, tumbling off her lips as beads from a careless string. She wipes her forehead and picks up her Isidwaba, dousing it in the pool of paraffin as she wrings her Mnazaretha.

It's a sunny Saturday morning and her husband is kneeling in prayer somewhere in the house, maybe their bedroom. Batande (four months old) is down for his nap, Lungile (seven years old) and Nkosinathi (four years old) are playing outside, she can hear them squealing and quarrelling. It's all in jest, they love each other, and she has given them that at least. What she is taking is her own love with her; she consoles herself with this as she picks up a matchstick.

She's been a good mother, a good wife and an obedient daughter and sister. This is not her own critique but that of her family and her husbands' but that was until Lendoda. Tall and sunny, with a generous laugh and heart he spoke to her once four years ago and in that one interaction her heart abandoned her. It packed all its belongings and she woke to discover it had found residence with him in the night. Meeting him in the bus to work a week after they first met, she saw him sit with it in his breast pocket; ignorant of her hearts' blush and hiccup he smiled and offered her his seat. For a year that is all Lendoda would offer her, a seat in a crowded bus and a glimpse of her satisfied heart in his possession. Lendoda, himself a member of Shembe, respected Zippi as the wife of another, a sister in faith and a mother to children he treated with sweets and tickles.



In the past year, Lendoda lost his wife in a car accident and in this, Zippi saw God's clemency and an opportunity for her to retrieve her exiled heart. She consulted her brother, asking he speak on her behalf. A woman is a womb, a field to plant seed and wait for it to mature, to carry the family into the next. She was not suggesting divorce from her husband but rather an amicable arrangement. If her brothers sought and found a suitable replacement for her husband's family she would then be able to pass Lendoda's period of mourning with assurance that once it was over he would not have to search for a wife again.



Men hardly know the difference when all is told.

Run, until the city creeps up on you.
Run until you become the city.

We raced between metal railings once used to build army tanks
making our way
hobbling on cobbled stone
past pipes that frothed and steamed
our joints clicked in the cold.
down
down

To the edge of embankment on to the Thames to find
tiny fragment of bone in the sand,
sand on bone

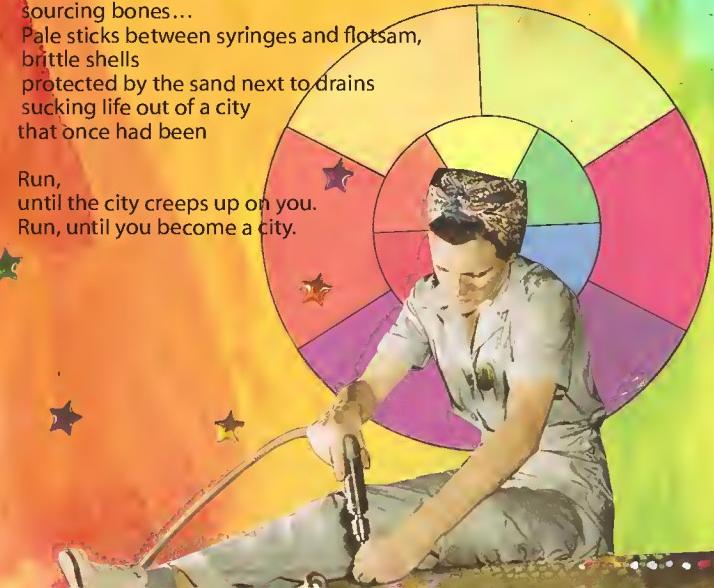
We gave them muscle and thought,
belonging to lives besides our own
Imagining who might have been.
The ladies of soot and sin,
Men of that machine and that little war.
Who worked till they were dry.
Who worked solid, unlike us drifters
sourcing bones...

Pale sticks between syringes and flotsam,
brittle shells
protected by the sand next to drains
sucking life out of a city
that once had been

Run,
until the city creeps up on you.
Run, until you become a city.

thames bones

- Leila Ruth





At this, Zippi was sent for an evaluation, prayers and holy water were slapped into her diseased body and the Devil was threatened in all manners for squatting in her soul. Her brothers, her husband and his family tried to hide the fact from the community but Zippi herself found nothing ill in her wishes.

This was love she protested, the Bible speaks highly of it, Solomon sang enchantingly of it. Why then is it that when God has trusted her with so brilliant a gift, her men attempt to destroy it? How is it the work of the Devil? She had not once told Lendoda of her feelings, she had instead pursued the right path, she had asked her guardians to act as interlocutors, she had found a solution for them all. She had averted shame and scandal and they saw madness in her that needed the intervention of iZangoma and other healers.

Today Lendoda is getting married; his family found him a young wife. A quiet girl from Kwa-Maphumulo ignorant to the ways of the city and excited by the hum of a geyser and the ping of a microwave, a girl so shy one has to peel her smiles from the ground. Zippi is lost. Not this child, Lendoda or even she, Zippi herself will ever eat with love or live with it. If she is to live on, she knows the grate of gall forever in her throat will madden her and give her children no peace.

She's almost done; her doek has enjoyed a long soak and drips paraffin with a drugged lethargy down her neck as she pulls uMnazaretha over her head. Zippi breaks the Shembe Sabbath, lighting a match she extinguishes the only flame she has a hand to control. At her death all people will talk about is the mad woman who abandoned her young children; no one will speak of her broken heart.

- Ella Jara

uMnazaretha – long white vestments of the Church of Shembe worn by men and women

sidwaba – a black cow hide skirt, made from hide off the first cow given to the bride before her wedding, traditionally worn by married Zulu women and those of the Church of Shembe

Lendoda – the object of Zippi's affection is not named, her love is taboo and therefore the family uses a word meaning 'This/That man' – implying his complicity in her crime

iZangoma – plural for iSangoma – a traditional healer

*A Shembe spiritual, the excerpt here is directly translated as 'Shembe of Nazareth, you are my shepherd'

